

# Veterans Outreach Center, Inc. - Laura Stradley

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## Organization Profile

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Organization Name	Mail Address
Veterans Outreach Center, Inc.	447 South Avenue , Rochester, NY 14620

Exec. Name	Contact Name	Phone	Email
Laura Stradley	Laura Stradley	585-546-1081	<a href="mailto:grants@vocroc.org">grants@vocroc.org</a>

**Mission/Vision** Veterans Outreach Center's mission is to serve veterans with compassion and advocate for all who have worn our nation's uniform so they can RISE and live life to the fullest. Respect: We treat everyone with dignity and compassion, and we show appreciation for strengths as well as vulnerabilities. Integrity: We are trust-worthy, honorable and professional. Taking ownership of our actions and communication is a top priority; we do this by conveying honesty and respect through tone, verbal and non-verbal interactions. We demonstrate fiscal responsibility with all resources. Service: We recognize the great sacrifices that are made by all who have worn our nation's uniform. We are committed to serving our veterans and their families with passion and deep appreciation. Excellence: We are hard-working, innovative and creative; we strive for continuous improvement. Our goal is to consistently grow the quality and scope of our services, in order to better meet the needs of our veterans.

**Receive County Funds?** YES - Monroe County, Department of Human Services - Emergency Housing (emergency and non-emergency rents programs). Description - All Veterans needing housing are referred to the VA Homeless point of Contact who assesses them for shelter placement. The VA receives referrals from VOC, MCDHS case workers, the VA Crisis Hotline, drug/alcohol inpatient treatment centers and police officers. If the veteran is homeless, then a face-to-face interview is scheduled for admission. The Residential Manager performs a final review prior to notification of acceptance. All clients are entered into HMIS within 72 hours of admission by our Administrative Assistant. An initial service plan is developed within the first three (3) days after admission. It is prepared in consultation with the resident and identifies the case manager assigned, rules, activities and expectations of the program participant. The outcome objective of Transitional housing is stabilization and sustainability towards the goal of obtaining and retaining permanent housing.

Monroe County, Division of Social Services - Eviction Prevention Pilot Initiative 2.0. Description - VOC is interviewing (in person or by phone), determining eligibility and administering rental arrears directly to property owners to maintain housing for Monroe County/City of Rochester residents facing eviction due to circumstances related to the current novel coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic. VOC is participating in a community wide eviction prevention pilot program, using the provided SimpliGov software platform and receive pre-screened referrals from 211.

Emergency Solutions Grant Program Services - Funding from the City of Rochester and Monroe County. Description: The City of Rochester and Monroe County funded a comprehensive community service delivery program intended to ameliorate and/or prevent homelessness with the following objectives:

- Stabilize at risk of homeless veterans by transitioning them to or stabilizing them in their current housing while providing case management services to increase the probability of retaining permanent housing.
- Leverage internal case management software for client information using "Apricot" software.
- Community Collaboration & Engagement Resulting in Sharing of Best Practices. Measure-Active participation in PEH network and on area provider boards/committees.
- Effective Program Oversight. Measure-Using case reviews, HMIS audits, site inspections, staff appraisals, surveys, management will ensure successful program oversight.

Monroe County, Veterans Service Agency- Case management and Peer Support Services. Description – VOC is responsible for providing clinical treatment advice, holding veterans accountable by providing weekly reports to the presiding judge, drug testing veterans through urinalysis, and providing clinical options to the treatment court staff regarding potential treatment. The Veterans Court Case Manager oversees program implementation, volunteer recruitment, and ensures completion of reporting requirements, to include military service era; mental health diagnoses for program participants such as PTSD, Traumatic Brain Injury, and Military Sexual Trauma (MST); number of group meetings held and number of participants; community referrals made to each program participant; number of participants who enroll in VA healthcare, apply for service connected disability, or utilize other VA benefits following program involvement /discharge from jail.

**Div. of Corp. N/A?** no

## Proposal Information

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**Project Name** Veteran Housing and Services Project (VHSP)

**Summary** Veterans Outreach Center is seeking funds to complete the renovation/expansion of our Transitional Housing complex for homeless male Veterans. This project will improve accessibility, safety, cleanliness, privacy, capacity, and independence for our clients. This historically protected building will retain all its exterior charm while bringing its internal amenities up to the life and safety standards required. We are adding 16 beds, with the capacity to expand to 28 additional beds if needed, totaling 66 beds upon completion (of note, we currently have 38 beds). This will allow us to address that on any given night 70 Veterans are homeless in Monroe County. As we have seen with congregate housing spaces during the pandemic, they face serious challenges when it comes to communicable diseases that we will mitigate with single dormitories and private bathrooms.

Adequate housing is essential for all people, especially those with poly-trauma, fractured social networks, and joblessness. Addressing veterans' homelessness, employment, and behavioral health concerns requires the comprehensive approach available at VOC. Our outreach, intensive case management of services, substance abuse/mental health counseling, behavioral health and wellness programs, housing, and training and employment services create the critical pathway to employment that provides a living wage needed to end their chronic homelessness.

Due to supply chain issues, labor shortages, and increased costs because of the pandemic this project is now going to cost over \$7 Million dollars compared to the initial \$4 million VOC was quoted by multiple contractors.

<b>Workforce/Economic?</b>	<b>Health/Safety?</b>	<b>Infrastructure/Sustainability?</b>
yes	yes	yes

**Description** a. The Veteran Housing and Services Project (VHSP) will advance all three of the Bring Monroe Back goals.

**Workforce Development** – The Employment and Training Services at VOC will help increase the median Per Capita income in Monroe County. All veterans in this project will enroll in the workforce development program at VOC. VOC's 2022 US Department of Labor Veterans Employment and Training Services Homeless Veterans Reintegration Program grant will enroll 240 homeless veterans with a 70% placement rate at an average hourly wage of \$19.07. In 2021, VOC helped 218 veterans gain meaningful employment, creating a \$6,500,000 economic impact in our community. Veterans leave our shelter programs with an employment rate of 80%.

The capital portion of the VHSP will leverage 4 Minority-Owned Firms located in Monroe County at an amount of \$614,201.00, 4 Women owned businesses at an amount of \$410,201.00, and 2 Service-Disabled Veteran Owned Businesses at \$514,400.

**Public Health and Safety** – The project will increase Behavioral Health Services provided in Monroe County. Our shelter provides more than just a place to sleep; it provides supportive services and tools for successful civilian life. All veterans at Richards House have access to VOC's Behavioral Health Services (BHS). The BHS Program provides a client-centric safe haven for veterans seeking mental and physical health, wellness, and preventive services in a non-clinical setting. BHS offers veterans and their families' short term intensive case management, trauma- informed peer support groups and activities, wellness programs, and crisis support. The program addresses the unique, trauma- laden issues that veterans face. VOC combats veteran suicide rates by equipping veterans with the tools and supports essential for transition back into civilian life.

The project will reduce the percentage of food insecure people in Monroe County. Richards House residents receive free meals. Life skills classes help with long-term food insecurity issues including food prep/cooking classes, budgeting classes, food shopping and more. VOC also runs a Quartermaster Program that provides free food, clothing, and personal care items to all veterans in the community. On average, we provide 27,000 meals annually.

**Infrastructure and Sustainability** – The VHSP will create an environment to maintain and improve quality of life for future generations of veterans. This project will advance accessibility, safety, cleanliness, privacy, capacity, and independence for our clients.

The renovation will have a positive impact on the environment. The shelter's current cold food storage made up of 17 appliances will all be condensed into a more energy efficient walk-in cooler/freezer. The shelter currently operates without any A/C on the top floors accounting for as much as 20,000 sqft relying on inefficient window units. This renovation will upgrade our HVAC systems to provide a more comfortable environment that benefits our veterans and the environment. The upgrades include all new insulation, which will help contain escaping energy. Additionally, with these funds we plan to purchase an electric vehicle (for staff to transport clients), electric scooters (for clients) and install a charging station.

Lastly, this funding would provide every successful veteran a tablet and internet (for a year) to aide in their success after discharge. This will increase the ratio of households with a computer and internet.

b. This funding would ensure completion of our renovation (a one-time cost) and help with essential supportive services. VOC enters its 50th year in 2023 and is grateful to have many community partners, supporters, funders, and an Advancement Team that work to

secure funding for VOC. These support systems will allow the projects/programs to remain sustainable after 2026.

c. The renovation will eliminate barriers, increase accessibility, and promote health, safety, and well-being for Monroe County residents in several ways: The building will be updated with ADA compliant standards including the installation of an elevator, fire alarm systems with audio and visual warning, handicap accessible door hardware and doorway widths, etc. Additional communal living spaces, additional laundry facilities, private dormitories/bathrooms, and a commercial grade kitchen will improve the well-being of all residents. Additional private rooms will mitigate the risk of communicable disease and allow us to serve a larger portion of the homeless population in a safer environment.

d. The VHSP will accomplish the following outcomes to positively transform Monroe County:

- Close the gap between the number of homeless veterans in Monroe County and the number of shelter beds available to them. Add 16 beds, with the capacity to expand to 28 additional beds if needed, totaling 66 beds upon completion (currently have 38 beds).
- Provide supportive housing to 100 male veterans per year with an 80% positive discharge rate.
- Behavioral Health Program – serve 600 veterans, 5,000 times per year
- Quartermaster Program (food pantry and clothing)– serve 800 veterans, 3,000 times per year
- Our Employment and Training Program will help enroll 240 homeless veterans with a 70% placement rate at an average hourly wage of \$19.07. This will in turn help increase the median per capita income of Monroe County residents.
- Environmental impact – lower our carbon footprint with energy star rated appliances, electric vehicles and improved electrical lines / building efficiency
- Increase the ratio of households with a computer and internet by providing each positively discharged veteran (goal of: 46 vets per year) with a tablet and internet.
- Utilize 4 Minority-Owned Firms located in Monroe County at an amount of \$614,901.00, 4 Women owned businesses at an amount of \$410,201.00, and 2 Service-Disabled Veteran Owned Businesses at \$514,400 for building renovations.
- VOC will provide supportive services to all 100 residential clients per year, including intensive case management, crisis intervention, behavioral health services, legal services, peer-support groups, and more. These supportive services, combined with the housing result in veteran's self-sustainability, personal goal achievement, and the ability to contribute to the community.

e. The project will continue to impact Monroe County residents beyond 2026 as the infrastructure to serve more veterans in a safer, healthier environment will be complete. All supportive services will continue, as they have since 1973, with strong fiscal management and fundraising.

**Company Strengths** VOC is the nation's oldest community based not-for-profit organization dedicated solely to serving veterans and their families. VOC was founded in 1973, through the dedicated efforts of Vietnam veterans in order to better serve the local veteran population. Today's Veterans Outreach Center remains anchored in our community, and offers a comprehensive portfolio of supportive services designed to meet the needs of veterans and their families through direct service, community collaboration, and advocacy. Our one-stop approach is designed to address the unique challenges veterans face, including homelessness and its attenuating causes.

In 2019 and 2020, we received the "Hire VETS" Medallion which is the only federal-level veterans' employment award that recognizes a company or organization's commitment to veteran hiring. In 2021, we were named the Health and Wellness Champion of the Year Workplace Wellness award from the Rochester Business Journal. In 2019, VOC Executive Director was named a Woman of Excellence by the Rochester Business Journal. In 2015, VOC was recognized by the George W. Bush Institute as one of the top twenty-five community-based organizations in the United States serving veterans and their families. In September 2011, our 90% placement rate among job-seeking clients attracted national attention and a visit by legislators and the President's Chairperson of the White House Council on Environmental Quality and the Acting Deputy Assistant Secretary of Labor-VETS where our program was recognized as "one of the nation's most effective veteran employment assistance programs".

VOC is considered a leader in veteran services in the community. When other agencies and community partners identify a veteran in need they refer them to VOC. VOC staff attend hundreds of outreach events per year and go into other local shelters, soup kitchens, surrounding county Veterans' Service Agencies, American Legion Posts, VFW's and other vet organizations to spread awareness of our services.

**Community Resources** a. Community Partners - Action for Better Community, Catholic Family Center, CCSI, Center for Youth, City of Rochester - Neighborhood & Business Development, House of Mercy, MC Collaborative, Monroe County, Partners Ending Homelessness, PCHO, Providence Housing, RAIHN, Veterans Affairs, VOA, Willow Domestic Violence Center, YWCA, and more.

b. VOC has a spot on the CoC work group (many of the partners listed above). The CoC also known as Partners Ending Homelessness is comprised of both HUD funded and non-HUD funded organizations. Partners Ending Homelessness collaborates with HSN Homelessness Services Network which is made up of 215 individuals and meets monthly and organizes different work groups and committees that address the needs of the homeless the organizations serving them. The Coordinated Entry Committee that determines the assessment tool and process for identifying the most appropriate solution for a person experiencing homelessness. This work group for example is made up of many agencies and meets weekly.

c. Major financial supporters for the project thus far include:

U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs - Veterans Grant Program, New York State - Homeless Housing and Assistance Program (HHAP), Kevin and Stacey Morgan, Golisano Foundation, Steve and Carol Preston, Tim Fornier Family Foundation, Philip Saunders, Chris Russell, LeChase Construction/Conifer, Wegmans Foundation, and more.

**Audience** a. Yes, the community this project will serve is a historically underrepresented, vulnerable, underserved population - Veterans (100% of our clients, most are at or below the poverty line). Of the 1,600 veterans we serve annually below is a breakdown of client demographics of minority populations we serve.

Black: 33.51%

Hispanic: 7.01%

Bi-Racial: .81%

Asian: .62%

Native American: .86%

Females: 14%

Seniors: (over 65): 25.57%

Veterans' are collectively in jeopardy of not being able to recover from the effects of COVID-19 and other communicable diseases. Many veterans have presumptive conditions as a result of the toxins they are exposed to in the military and the presumed diseases which result from said exposure. Vietnam veterans were exposed to Agent Orange, Desert Storm veterans were required to take anti-nerve agent Bromide pills, which has been linked to a series of conditions called Gulf War syndrome, post 9/11 veterans were exposed to burn pits in Iraq and Afghanistan and Marine Corps veterans who served at Camp Lejeune had contaminated drinking water from 1957 – 1987. All of these exposures have led to cancers, respiratory conditions, diabetes, and/or other issues that would put someone who tests positive for COVID at high risk for serious complications. Physically, they are at tremendous risk for the virus itself. In addition, the mental health impact that Covid restrictions and isolation has had on the veteran community has worsened problems such as PTSD and suicidal ideations. This project will help protect the lives of our veterans who must live in communal spaces due to homelessness by giving them privacy through single bedrooms, additional living spaces, staff and peer support.

b. No, VOC is honored to provide all services at no cost to our targeted individuals (veterans). This is possible thanks to the generous support of our funders and community.

<b>Cost 1st Year</b>	<b>Cost All Years</b>	<b>Residents 1st Year</b>	<b>Residents All Years</b>	<b>FT Employees</b>	<b>PT Employees</b>
\$1,300,625.00	\$1,974,500.00	1,100	4,400	34	11
<b>Volunteers</b>					
168					

**Staffing** - Laura Stradley, Executive Director - Laura oversees all agency programs and services. Laura is an Army veteran with an MBA from Baker College. Laura's worked with veterans for nearly two decades, and in 2015, she was inducted into the NYS Senate Veterans Hall of Fame. She is a published author and has received the Woman of Excellence award.

- Alec Andrest, Director of Program Operations - Alec joined the Marine Corps in 2006 and deployed to Afghanistan in 2010, serving honorably until 2014. After his return, he started his own planning business where he began veteran advocacy work. In 2016, Alec joined Veterans Outreach Center as the Residential Manager overseeing the Emergency, Transitional, Supportive Living, and PSH programs. In 2018, he was promoted to Residential Director, securing a position with a more active role in strategic planning and resource acquisition for VOC.

- Behavioral Health Services Staff - This would be a new hire with case management experience and / or mental health licensure. Onsite staff support, day and night is offered at Richard's House, and this new hire would augment that team.

- Overnight Contracted Security Officer - this is a new hire to ensure any emergencies or issues would be handled immediately by an individual with lifesaving certifications.

Relevant staff expertise - As noted, VOC has already completed a large-scale capital renovation project in the facility right next door to Richards House. The same leadership team and Board members are at VOC now that managed that project.